No. 16.

Judaism and Modern Religion

A DISCOURSE
BY
EMIL G. HIRSCH

BM
535
H56
1900
GTU
Storage

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

THE REFORM ADVOCATE
BLOCH & NEWMAN, PUBLISHERS
204 DEARBORN STREET. - - - CHICAGO, ILL.

Judaism and Modern Religion

A DISCOURSE

BY

EMIL G. HIRSCH

THE REFORM ADVOCATE
BLOCH & NEWMAN, PUBLISHERS
204 DEARBORN STREET. - - - CHICAGO, ILL.

BM
535
H56
1900

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/judaismmodernrel0000emil

JUDAISM AND MODERN RELIGION.

The signs are multiplying that the frigid winter days of chilly indifference to religion are drawing to their decline. They who have eyes for the subtler indications announcing an impending change in the attitude of men on the deeper themes of life and conduct, of speculation and conviction, are not in doubt that the race is on the threshold of a religious renaissance. For the voices are many and varied crying out for light. The hunger for more than bread is clearly upon the best of our generation. The best of our time still rejoice in the conquests wrought by the applied sciences but they have also come to recognize and do not hesitate to witness to the faith that is within them that though man considered from one angle of vision is one of the uncounted beings pursuing their way according to the inexorable plan of soulless forces that hold in their control stars and stones and worlds and solar systems, when regarded from another point of survey he is dowered with freedom and appointed to obligations as well as destined to reach goals for which the operation of mechanical laws cannot account and in the formulation of which their verdict is inconsequential.

It is true this assurance that a turn in the tide of human thought and interest is about to set in is as yet

the sweet confidence of the elect. He who is familiar with the run of the spiritual currents marked in the chart of history must be prepared for this observation. The sun when rising imprints his morning kiss first upon the high mountain peaks. They who slumber in the deeper valleys must wait for many an hour before they may behold the glorious king of the day enter their habitation. The men of light and leading have even now beckoned us of limited vision to share their joy in the flood of the nascent light. Books certainly betray the drift of thought characterising the hour of their birth. Time was when the printing presses of all civilised nations were busy sending out popular accounts of the discoveries made by astronomer and physicist; when the new chemistry and geology was thus introduced to every drawing room and took precedence of every other subject in polite conversation. Though many a pulpit today is still of the opinion that in order to be "up to date" at third and fourth hand it must discourse long and learnedly on biology and petrology and drench the congregation with a turbid torrent of quasi scientific terms culled painfully from encyclopedia and manual, they who have a truer understanding of the modern tendencies know that such sorry and sophomoric exhibition of the ability to syllable technical phraseology is, whatever else it may be, not entitled to parade as the newest and noblest expression of the dominant interests of the day. In very fact, the passion for acquaintance with popularised Darwinian speculation has long since waned. Its place two decades ago was filled by the ardent and more laudable desire to be informed on the researches of men engaged in the study of the evolution of society and the proper adjustment of the antagonistic social forces. Sociology was the besetting appetite of

those that were preparing for the leadership of men twenty and ten years ago. Again it must be said that our would be modern preachers are somewhat belated who utilise the opportunity of their craft at this day to vociferate on sociology as a new fetich. For in the mean time the consciousness has deepened that sociology is under the consecration of ethics and this in turn had led to the fuller recognition that ethics postulates if it would not be a mere prudential scheme, an ethical purpose underlying the processes of the universe and involved in the very nature of man. No wonder then that the genuinely "up to date" books are busy unraveling the perplexities of the ethical sanctions and sanctifications, in one word that they are concerned with the realities of religion. The publishing of books of this scope and intention is the one symptom justifying the statement that we are nearing a religious renaissance.

Of the many serious volumes to which I ascribe this witnessing import, I may mention only one. It is the work of a famous German thinker, Professor Euken of Jena. Its title even is significant. "Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion." It shows that the quest for religious truth has come to be understood as one of the pressing necessities of the modern mind. The same meaning may correctly be read into the controversies growing out of the appearance of Haeckel's famous publication: "The riddles of the universe." This great naturalist of Germany has felt the obligation to sum up his convictions concerning the meaning of life. His attitude is such as to give but cold comfort to the rank materialists. Nevertheless his conclusions have been easily detected as insufficient. Not merely the dogmatists of the orthodox churches had a comparatively light

task to expose his untenable inferences. They of the critical school, as well, rushed to the defense of the spiritual implications of the humanities. Nor is the noise made in both hemispheres alike by the lectures of Professor Delitsch on the Bible and Babel of minor import. The keen interest aroused by these discussions betokened indeed the growing sympathy in the circles of the cultured with the problems bearing on the literature of religion and its fundamentals, and to dwell on only one other occurrence of similar bearing, Harnack's deliverances on the essence of Christianity have found a hearing far beyond the limited reach of professional students. As Schleiermacher well nigh a century before had brought religion again within the orbit of attention of its avowed contemners so the Berlin Protestant Professor of our day had an audience to speak to, remarkable in the highest degree both for quantity and quality.

The fact then stands that religion once more occupies a prominent position in the interest of modern man. To account for this phenomenon, we are not forced to go far afield. As long as negative materialism was content to be a theory it mattered but little where and how it proclaimed its evangel. But from being a philosophy entertained by a few choice spirits who always were scrupulous in drawing the distinction between theoretical and ethical materialism, it had gradually come to be regarded as the prophet of the final canons of human conduct. The "slang" of the biological laboratory was invoked to justify selfishness as the only principle of rational action. The struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest did good service to legitimatise extortion while Nietzsche was cited to the witness stand to declare the complete emancipation of the titanic men of might or cunning from the conventional restrictions

devised for slave natures and then proclaimed holy in the name of servile morality. The stress and distress of the combat for bread which if waged on the principle that duty and kindliness were checks to success, while success vindicated whatever means employed in its attainment, was bound and had even now gone very far, to undo humanity and reduce society to an aggregate of robber competitors, of "economic men," had opened the eyes of the thoughtful and had quickened to dissent the sentiments of even the less well favored in mental equipments. Man was after all more than a bread consuming machine and the humanities could not be expressed by an equation in food supply. This conviction growing apace with the increase of the pressure produced by the struggle waged without regard of the wider and richer and ideal connotations of the humanities, has had its corresponding assertion in the deepening cry for a fuller play and profounder influence of religion in the adjustment of the relations subsisting or that should subsist between man and man. Thus the function of religion as one of the basic constituents of complete humanity was in ever increasing degree brought to the forefront. From this still largely mental recognition of the part reserved for religion in the economy of man to the fuller activising of religion is but one step and unless all auguries deceive, our generation is on the verge of taking that step.

In measure as the results of the science of comparative religion will be better understood the number of those eager to welcome religion again to her beneficent ministry will increase. If rationalism has been dethroned the prime factor in this welcome revolution was undoubtedly the well grounded insistence urged by this young "science" that religion belonged organically to

normal human nature. Rationalism had contended that religion was artificial. Either an invention or an intrigue, it was by this eighteenth century school declared to be an imposition. This is even the undertone quivering through the thrilling story of the three rings as told by that highpriest of tolerance Lessing. None of the marvelously effective rings is genuine. The studies in comparative religion have established beyond a shadow of doubt that religion is not an invention or an intrigue. It was not devised by benevolent sages for the easing of the burdens of life, as a sort of opiate dulling the pain of the struggle by promise of greater joy to come. It was not born in the desire of kings and statesmen to render the governing of the masses easier by invoking the will of superhuman powers and devising a scheme of heavenly rewards wherewith to coax the recalcitrants into submission, or of infernal punishments wherewith to frighten the obstinate into obedience. In the institutions of religion is not hidden hygienic prophylactic wisdom that could not have met with acceptance by the masses unless the lawgiver, as according to rationalistic theory he did, had palmed it off as come to him from divine source and cloaked with divine authority. This twaddle which used to be the stock in trade of certain would-be enlightened men, in which even Ingersoll indulged and not to the hurt of his pocketbook, that priests anxious to increase their revenues speculating on the greed and the fears of the people hypnotised the credulous into accepting as of divine origin statute prescribing sacrifices or creed demanding blind belief; or that benevolent statesmen knowing that certain regulations were bound to redound to the health and certain promises to the happiness of the nation had brought about their promulgation under the deception that they

were of divine origin and sanction, must today be abandoned. They that still indulge in it whatever their official position, whether in the pulpits and there admired as the latest prophets of utraliberalism, or in the pews and there posing as radical defenders of the independence of man, show by their affectation that they belong among the Rip van Winckles who have slept while the world round about them has been awake. This species of antidiluvian liberalism has no standing in the court where the science of comparative religion is called to plead. This science has made it plain that religion is coextensive with the boundaries of the human race. While individuals may occasionally be met with in whom the religious faculty is dormant or is atrophied, no group of men has been found that was without some form of religion. This shows that religion is in correspondence with a need of human nature. It is organic therefore not artificial.

This universality of religion is fatal to the distinction often made between religions as natural and revealed. If one religion be revealed, all are, and if one be natural all are. Whatever form of religion subsists in a race or is dominant in an age corresponds always to the culture of that race or that age. Revelation from without or above would to be effective always have to accommodate itself to the mental equipment of the men to whom it is addressed or take into consideration the needs of the people whom it would guide. A revelation that transcends the intelligence of the men and minds that are intended to be influenced thereby, would of necessity be futile. Before a generation is ripe for the proclamation of ethical monotheism, that is to say before its own great men of genius could by their own thinking arrive at the implications of such monotheistic views, the verbal an-

nouncement of the fundamental tenets of monotheism will produce no effect. It seems to me that our own Bibilical historiography brings this out in striking manner. They who had just heard the divine voice announcing the second commandment are the very men that clamor for the golden calf. Lessing's conception of revelation as an historical process, a method of upward education has been corroborated by the researches in comparative religion. Every religion corresponds to the need and the mental outlook of the people that professes it.

This does not vitiate the force of the influence exercised upon the process of development by the great men, the prophets. Genius is one of the channels through which revelation flows. In the last analysis genius always displays an element to account for which sky and earth and climate and environment and heredity are impotent. Men endowed with genius always stand on higher peaks than the men to whom they bring their message. This message itself has come to them they know not how. It is irresistible. It is a consuming fire in their bones. It is stronger than the recipient. It overpowers the men who are singled out for it and by it. These men of genius anticipate often by long centuries the slow evolution of thought among their cotemporaries. Therefore they often have to speak to deaf ears. They see what the duller eyes of their fellowmen cannot detect. They announce what the irresponsive mind of their day cannot grasp. That has been the tragic fate of the prophets in Israel. In that sense they were exponents of a revelation transcending the conditions of their time. For this reason too, their words have import and potency for ages by many leagues of time separated from their birthhour. With this fact kept in view even

the student of the evolution of religion along historical lines may ascribe to the proclamations of these men an efficacy for our late century.

And this brings up another important consideration. It has been argued that if the distinction between revealed and natural religion be ignored, all religions must be declared to be equivalent. The fallacy of this conclusion is patent. Religion has its analogon in language. That language is not an invention but an original creation of the human organism and involved therein is one of the fundamental contentions of modern philosophical philology. The stammering dialect of the Patagonians has the same credentials as may be displayed by the fluent speech of Demosthenes. Yet would for that just insistence one be permitted to urge that the speech of the Athenian was not better adapted to the richer sweep of Athenian life than the halting jargon of the Patagonian who did not develop a wealthier language simply because the invitation thereto was lacking in the necessities of his internal and external preoccupations? Some languages are dowered with flexibility and adaptability. They accommodate themselves to a growing life and therefore retain strength to outlast the succession of centuries. They are living idioms replenishing their store of power by new assimilations. Others of the family are so restrained as to waste away after a while or as to lack the ability to answer the fuller requirements of new conditions. These are the media of intercourse in a neighborhood either locally or temporally circumscribed. These weaker members of the linguistic tribe after a while die off. They are studied and remembered as the dead languages. The same holds good with reference to religions. Some have died. Others have retained their virility and vitality after ages. Some

were tethered to the needs of a low type of civilisation. Others from the very beginning were so equipped as to expand and deepen in content and influence with the progressive changes of local environment or temporal habitat. Some have displayed the capability of adapting their symbolism to all conditions of human endeavor and ambition, of uplook and inlook having from the first laid emphasis on the vital things underlying all human existence on the essential difference between man and the brute, and therefore under all their varying forms have been expressive of the eternally true and eternally insistent duty the performance of which is the prerequisite to all that would be genuinely human.

It is among the living religions that have manifested this characteristic of adaptability at no expense or compromise of vital truth that by the unbiased canons of this science of comparative religion, the religion of the Jew has been assigned the first rank. Judaism and the other higher expressions of the religious needs and implications of human nature *qua* human as distinct from brutal, are by no means robbed of their crown jewels. Though under the same laws of birth as the Fetich worshiper's impulse the religious consciousness of the Jew, largely through the influence of the genius of the prophets, has developed greater intensity and clearness. To say that the doctrine of a Micah is equivalent to that of some Shaman magician amounts to subscribing to the theory that mole and mouse and monkey are equivalent to Praxiteles and Edison.

Furthermore this science of comparative religion has enabled us to grasp most accurately certain distinctions between the various religions with reference to their fundamental ambitions, their atmosphere so to speak. Generally religions are ranged and ranked according to

the numerical exponent of the Deity. Polytheism, monotheism, and the like are the consequent designations rated to reveal the relative character. I for one regard these discriminations according to the numerical coefficient in front of the symbol for the deity of little moment. A much more vital line of cleavage is that which follows the axis of the ultimate purpose of the religious life. Is salvation from inherited sin, is remission of sin by which the Deity has been offended, is attainment of prosperity or felicity, is consolation through assurance of compensations in the life after death, is reward, is escape from punishment the ultimate of religious prospect and the source of religion's power? Or is religion the disciplinary exercise producing fuller realisation of the human in the individual and in society and as such an end unto itself and not a means to something ulterior, is worthiness not happiness either here or hereafter the aim of religious culture? These are the vital antitheses. In other words some religions are religions of salvation. Their undernote is pessimism. Despair, the consciousness of what theologians have construed as sin, and sin as a status not as an act, contempt for this life for the sunshine of this earth, is the one emphasis of the religious concept. Death is the central magnet, as well as the ubiquitous obession. Man's unworthiness is the recurrent Leitmotif of all confession. But at least one religion is the joyful proclamation of the dignity and the joy of a truly human life. Its one constantly recurrent appeal is to remember that man and God are not "at outs." The worthiness of human life is never blurred and religion's purpose is not held to be to help man to felicity here or hereafter, but to make him realise in ever fuller measure the worthiness which should be his as one made in the image

of God. This religion then cannot be a religion of despair. It does not propose to be a scheme of salvation and atonement. Its consecration is none other than ethical, taking this word in its deepest sense which locates the ethical purpose in the centre of all things and thus is bound to link man's ethical life and all this implies to a Law and a Will, a Power not ourselves, making for righteousness, to God. And would you know the name of this one religion which is not to be classed with the religions of salvation? I have no hesitancy to declare that that one religion is our Judaism, the Judaism of the prophets; of the sages, the religion for which thousands willingly gave their lives in defence of their conviction that man never fell and therefore never needed a redeemer in the sense of the atoning scheme devised by the Church founded by Paul who, confounding the sense of imperfection which of course is always active in man with a consciousness of helplessness and sinfulness, reasoned out from this wrong premise the titanic theology in which God and man are placed at opposing poles and the vicarious selfsacrifice of the Godhead alone—which sacrifice is again merely an act of grace to which unworthy man was not entitled in justice—may reestablish the disrupted harmony between the Creator and His hapless blind creature.

These indubitable theses of the science of religion we should hold in mind when we proceed to inquire what character that religion will have which will be the glorious consummation of the religious renaissance about to ensue. One thing is certain, this religion will be such as to appeal to every modern man in full possession of the wealth of modern mental and moral culture. Hence it will not recur to the dogmas in conflict with the well grounded declaration of the natural sciences and histor-

ical critics. The reign of Law will be one of its cherished teachings. Belief in Miracle, in the geology of the poetry of the Bible will be accorded no place among its tenets. Bibliolatry will also be excluded from its sanctuary. Nor will it be dogmatic. Especially that central dogma of Paulinian Christianity that man was created perfect in the beginning but forfeited his perfection lapsing through disobedience and therefore requiring miraculous intervention of another before again being re-established to a state that might render his salvation possible, will be relegated to the limbo of exploded theories. For evolution has made it plain, if it has made one thing evident, that perfection was not in the beginning. Rationalists of the Jean Jacques Rousseau type as well dogmatists of the Luther and St. Augustine bent will not be invited to controvert the contrary propositions of our modern naturalists that read in the phenomena of life in all departments the convincing proofs of a gradual ascent of man from less perfect to more perfect conditions.

In this connection the attitude of the so called liberal theologians of the Christian church is of interest. Harnack may be regarded as their spokesman. In his famous lectures on the essence of Christianity and in other utterances of his he takes virtually the stand—in fact to prove this contention was the purpose of his lectures—that the religion of the future adapted to the needs of modern man and answering every cry of his soul without coming into conflict with a single one of his cherished convictions as a man brought up under the dominancy of our modern sciences, will be none other than the religion of Jesus. This for Harnack is the absolute religion as Christianity was for Hegel. In a controversy which Harnack had with his colleague Pflei-

derer he argued that Protestant theologians could well afford to ignore the studies of the masters of comparative religion in as much as their religion had absorbed into itself everything that was of value in the others, and the historical study of Christianity was therefore in very truth a course in comparative religion. It is however of moment to note that contrary to Hegel, Harnack claims the distinction of the absolute religion for that of the historical Jesus. How far he is justified in labeling that as Christianity is open to serious objections. The protest against his terminology has not alone come from the non-Christian side of the house. Men of influence and position in the Church have registered their dissent. They have denied the Christianity of Jesus as evolved by Harnack the right to the name. And the better argument is certainly theirs. Christianity is the religion in which the Christ concept is central. This Christ is the atoning sufferer the redeemer from the curse of Adam and as such master and Lord of the Law which in his death finds its abrogation as it was merely a pedagogue unto Christ. The historical Jesus is certainly not this Christ.

Placing his central emphasis on the religion of the historical Jesus Harnack might in all reason be expected either to admit that this religion was none other than that of the synagogue cotemporaneous with the Nazarene or to prove by evidence that cannot be doubted that the religion this teacher taught and practiced rose above the level of religious conviction and consecration regarded as the highest among his Jewish neighbors and kinsmen. The possibility that a teacher may rise to higher altitudes of outlook than his age has scaled cannot be called into dispute. Genius, as I have tried to urge a little while ago, is always dowered with this

capacity. Jesus might have been one of the rare men whose insight was deeper than that owned by any other of mortal clay, whose religiosity was of an intenser and purer fire than what burned in the heart of the best of his time or people. But this possibility cannot be assumed at the outset without convincing proof. The very implications of the adjective "historical" by which these modern liberal Protestants, the leader of whom is Harnack, love to qualify their viewpoint would to any one not blinded by bias which contravenes the fundamental demands of the method invoked, suggest as the first step this demonstration of the uniqueness of the attitude and the originality of the teachings of Jesus. Careful perusal of the many works of recent authorship and of profound scholarly consecration on the historical Jesus has confirmed in me and in others, whose judgment is of a quality and value superior to mine, the suspicion that these first prerequisites of the genuinely historical method have been consistently ignored. Harnack's lectures exhibit the identical mistake. He assumes what it is for him to prove and then proceeds from his assumption to draw inferences which of course cannot but be as weak as his unwarranted premise. That premise in brief is the contention that the religion of Jesus transcended the highest uplooks of Judaism. That between the best that Judaism inculcated and the teachings of the master gapes a chasm unbridged. The historical Jesus thus is virtually placed outside of the operation of historical laws. He has no connection with the aims, the necessities, the hopes and the knowledge of his native land or his natal day.

In this practical denial of the historicity of the historical Jesus it is not difficult to trace the lingering influence of the very Paulinian theology that the liberal wing of the Protestant theological army has refused to

accept. In the Paulinian scheme, the antithesis between the Law and the Gospel is fundamental. The Christ is necessarily above all historical nexus. The Law is only a pedagogue unto Christ just as classical culture was providentially devised to demonstrate its impotency to meet the needs of the human soul. The Law could not but multiply sin and therefore defeat the reliance of its observers which, according to him of Tharsus, was to propitiate the angry God and to wash away the load of sin laid on the race in consequence of the disobedience of its first progenitor, Adam. The Jew therefore is under the curse of the Law. Freedom from the Law is only in and through the Christ who, the second Adam, by his death works the atonement and thus abrogates the Law by his death which alone is the fulfillment of the Law. In the writings of the Liberal Protestant school this antithesis which is logical in the system of Paul, between Judaism and the mission of Jesus recurs in the form of an insistence that the historical Nazarene stood on peaks which to reach none of the synagogue had been competent. Judaism for these liberal theologians is soulless, mechanical legalism. The religion of Jesus is spiritual consecration under the light of love for God and man so intense as to obliterate distinctions of station, origin, blood or nation, a love so profound as to bring to fruition the consciousness of the unity of man and God, man being the child and God the father, a thought which necessarily makes all men brothers. Religion under the spell of this love ceases to be mechanical service. It is not a matter of outward regulation. It is the complete surrender of self to the purposes of God. It is the anticipation of the kingdom within and thus a resolute faith in kingdom to be. Jesus in his own life and death realised as none before or after him this consciousness of oneness with the

father, this stirring of the sense of sonship to God, this love for man, this trust in God, this complete self-surrender even unto death.

Before proceeding to inquire into the basis for this construction of the life of Jesus and the import of the message held to have been his, it will be of interest to note that this new theology which loves to invoke the historical Jesus marks a decided advance in so far as it has eliminated from the system the Paulinian concept of sin and consequent salvation, dependent upon the vicarious suffering and death of the Redeemer. In that loose thinking which because it makes no demand for clearness or scholarship is very popular, this abandoning of the Paulinian principle and construction has been hailed as a step away from Judaism. Many of our anti-Semitic friends have been very urgent in their insistence that Christianity emancipate itself from the baneful connection with the religion of the Jew. And many of these, just as some of our Unitarian brothers whom, however, none may justly accuse of anti-Semitic obsessions, have actually welcomed this relinquishing of Paulinian reasoning as an elimination of Jewish notions. For in the Levitical sacrificial code, they have discovered or believed to have discovered in gross material guise the very principle underlying Paulinianism. Had these men of anti-Jewish proclivities not neglected to take account of the results of modern Biblical criticism, and had they paid some attention to the researches of ethnologists, they might be expected, but for congenital stupidity, to realise that the abandoning of Paulinian constructions is not in the nature of ousting Judaism from the sanctuary but rather of a welcome to the tenets of Judaism. The whole of the Paulinian system is grounded in Semitic ideas which to controvert was one of the services rendered by Prophetic

religion. The Levitical code rests on quite different notions, notions not involved in theological speculation but in primitive concepts found everywhere at a certain stage of social development. And I for one have no hesitancy to declare that the prophets for this reason had but little sympathy with sacrificial piety. The institutions and provisions of the priestly code cannot at this late day be quoted in corroboration of the thesis that Judaism attempted to bring about the atonement and cleansing from sin by means of blood or that the notion of the atonement by substitution was fundamental in the religion of Isaiah, Jeremiah or even Ezra or Nehemiah. But be this as it may, it is clear that at the bottom of the theology of Paul is the very primitive idea of the law of taliation. The social unit of primitive society is not the individual but the clan or family. The tribe or sept is held responsible for the deeds of any of its component members. The blood spilled by one of their number calls for the blood of the offender or of any of his kin. Life for life is the recognised principle of justice in primitive society. It is this principle and the corresponding social organization that underlie the theology of Paul. Adam sinned, therefore his sin naturally involves the status of his descendants. From them the penalty to equalise the offense of their ancestor must be exacted. Death calls for death. As sin brought death upon all of Adam's progeny it may only be disarmed by the death of another. Substitution of one for another is regular in the thought-atmosphere in which the law of taliation represents the social consciousness of justice. Hence also the title "redeemer" for the substitute. This English term must be retranslated into the Hebrew original equivalent "*Goel*" to make its implications plain. The Goel is the blood avenger. It is he who

assumes the duty to see the death of another properly requited. Then it is he who acts in the stead of another. For instance the brother who marries the widow of his deceased brother that a son might be the issue of the new conjugal union who would perpetuate the name not of his natural father but of the imputed one i. e., the deceased husband of the mother, is the Goel. (See Boaz in the book of Ruth). It is then plain that Paul's theology is grounded in ancient Semitic tribal society and the ideas therein activised. Against this Semitism Jewish Prophecy has always been a protestant. Judaism and Semitism are not identical. In many vital points they are antipodal. Long before the advent of the teacher of Nazareth, prophetic thought had outrun the sweep of Semitic ideas. And certainly was this the case in the theory of personal responsibility over and against that of tribal obligation and substitution. He who sinneth shall die, is one of the emphatic proclamations of that prophet who more than others may be said to have laid some stress on sacrificial institutionalism. And even in the Pentateuch we come upon the query, "if one man sin, wilt Thou be incensed at the whole congregation?" These declarations certainly prove that prophetic religion had long before the era of the historical Jesus grasped to the full the principle of individual responsibility. In neglecting the Paulinian dogma they of the new school only revert to the sounder basis of that Judaism which Paul failed to understand. Anti-Paulinian has Judaism always been. Paulinian theology at no point intersects the sounder convictions of the Jewish religious consciousness.

But what now concerning the originality of the historical Jesus?

We may for the sake of argument overlook the difficulties besetting the attempt to draw the picture of this historical Jesus. That we have in the gospels no biography of him is certain. Nor are the various critics agreed as to what parts of the gospel accounts shall be regarded as probably more authentic. It will be no exaggeration to say that there have been as many representations of the historical Jesus as there have been writers. New Testament criticism has by no means precipitated a definite result. The problems that keep busy the students of the new Testament times and concepts, are many and none of them has as yet received its final answer. Was Jesus conscious of a Messianic destiny? This is one of the mooted points in controversy among the various schools. Many incline to the opinion that this element must be kept in mind would one unravel from the conflicting and fragmentary reports embodied in the gospels an approximately correct picture of the aim of his life. The Messianic consciousness of Jesus if it was the guiding impulse of his attitude and preachment, however, could have been none other than what was involved in the Messianic expectations of his people. From this point of view the latest attempts at reconstruing the life and ambition of the Nazarene have been carried on. And the result has been that more and more it has come to be recognised that the importance of his ministry must not be looked for or located in a possibly new doctrine he enunciated. Yea, it has been conceded to a certain degree by some scholars who have followed this line of research that the opposition formerly assumed to mark his utterances to the sages and scribes has but little foundation. The piety of the sages and scribes is beginning to be understood as by no means different in kind from that imputed to Jesus. Of course altogether this school will not aban-

don the time worn contention that Jesus outreached and outranked the best that the synagogue can call its own. In intensity if not in quality the piety and religiosity of Jesus must have been different from that of the sages and scribes. We ought to be thankful for this modification of the former position which would not admit that there was any approach to the lofty altitude on which Jesus was placed as above the religion of his contemporaries. Harnack and Bousset cannot altogether ignore the testimony of Rabbinical literature, but in order to save their prejudgment at all hazard, they dogmatise about the deeper content and richer sweep of the words attributed to Jesus holding the similarities which they cannot altogether deny to have been accidental, never essential. The logic of their attitude thus is of a dubious consistency.

But let us neglect all these considerations. In sober prosy earnestness let us accept the gospels as biographies and admit the authenticity of every word alleged therein to have been spoken by the Master. What do they contain that Judaism has not claimed as its own before his advent? Geiger and others have years ago contended that in all of these utterances there is neither trace of originality nor indication of the intention to be original. Beautiful as many of the sayings of Jesus are, inspiring as for the larger world his message has been, there is none of them but has had its prototype in the sayings of the masters of the synagogue. In fact many if not all of his sayings can only be understood properly if retranslated into the technical terminology of the theology of the synagogue of his day. Take for instance that concept so often invoked, that he had come to fulfill the law. Oceans of ink have been drained to give this phrase a meaning implying the abrogation of the law. Had the writers of the wonderfully learned theses on

this point only taken the trouble to look at a very familiar prayer in the daily service of the synagogue they could have saved themselves all their pain. To fulfill in this connection is the equivalent of the Hebrew *lekayem* which absolutely has no possible reference to the idea of abolishing the law. Fidelity to the law is emphasised, on the contrary.

As in this instance, so in the case of every one of his phrases the Aramaic talmudic equivalent alone throws light on the possible meaning. Dalman in his work: "Die Worte Jesus" makes indeed the attempt to prove that in the mouth of Jesus the technical terms represent values other than those carried by them when employed by the Rabbis. The proof for this contention has not been furnished. On the contrary, his argumentation has corroborated the historically reasonable assumption that if Jesus spoke as he is said to have spoken, of the Kingdom of Heaven, of the World to be and the like neither he nor they whom he addressed connoted therewith any thought but that familiarly expressed thereby in Jewish circles.

The conclusion of the matter then for us is that Harnack's historical Jesus was a Jew who had the views of his time. The religion of that Jew was none other than that of the synagogue of his day. One point is worthy of further discussion. Taking the life of Jesus and his teachings as recorded in the gospels—though I repeat many of the more advanced critics refuse to recognise the gospels as anything more than documents reflecting the later controversies of the church and others have gone so far as to deny the proof altogether of Jesus' historical personality—it is patent that his interests were largely ethical. Now Franz Delitzsch first and many after him, admitting that some of the New-Testament sentences are also found in the Talmud and

there ascribed to the sages of the synagogue and the academy, have made much ado of the circumstance that Hillel for instance who may be credited with teaching the golden rule was at the same time very much concerned about ritual trivialities, concerning which Jesus left no decision.

Superficially examined the point seems to establish a vital distinction between Hillel and Jesus. In the case of the former the ethical passion is secondary the ritual dominant, while in that of the latter it is dominant and exclusive. But upon closer analysis this inference appears unwarranted. Jesus is credited only with Haggadic sayings. The gospels may be described as a collection of Midrashic interpretations of Bible verses. Now had we of Hillel only his Haggadic preachings no mention in them would be found of Halakic decisions and preoccupations. Jesus in the light of the gospels is a mere Haggadist. This accounts for the absence of Halakic trivialities. The Halakic decisions which here and there are attributed to him in no way depart from well-known canons of Rabbinical conduct. He is at no point heterodox. His views on the Sabbath for instance are neither new nor revolutionary. In one word, Jesus as described in the gospels is altogether within the lines of the synagogue, nowhere beyond or above them.

To make him the exponent of individualism in religion as distinct from and superior to nationalism, has been the favorite presumption of many of the liberal theologians. In this his individualism they have found his superiority over the principles of Judaism. With the material at hand it is not very clear on what basis they have construed the universalism and individualism of Jesus. In many a passage certainly the Jesus of the gospels is the spokesman of the intensest Jewish nationalism. Nor is the proper, in fact the only correct con-

struction of the oft invoked saying that the kingdom of God is within (you) a more convincing proof. He who remembers how by signs and omens men were in the habit of computing the "end time" need not be told that in that passage the point of the controversy is directed against this custom which Jesus condemns on the ground that it is not necessary for them to count the signs and compute the omens, for with his coming the kingdom, i. e., the end time had come. He contends that the kingdom is in the midst of them even then. His statement does not admit of the interpretation generally adopted that he spoke of a kingdom within the soul and heart of men. His Messianic self-consciousness underlies his claim which amounts to saying, "Why still further speculate on the coming of the Messiah? Behold he is in the midst of you."

Among them who have on the strength of this false reading of this saying of Jesus discoursed if not learnedly then bitterly about the inferiority of Judaism compared to the religious outlook of Jesus, is also our friend Houston Steward Chamberlain, the author of the "Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," a book full of contradictions and still fuller of hatred of the Jew and Judaism. Seemingly written in the scientific spirit, this lucubration recalls vividly the efforts of some of the heroes of up-to-date pulpits to handle scientific propositions. While much admired by the "profanum vulgus" to use the happy phrase of Horace; these exercises are readily detected by experts as crude indulgences of amateurs. Had Chamberlain not seasoned his stew of history and anthropology and biology with the sharp pepper of anti-Semitism his wonderful hodgepodge would certainly have been spurned as beneath notice. But as he conformed to the prevailing predisposition of the age, and endeavored to justify Jew hating on scien-

tific grounds, and besides posed as the scientific defender of Teutomania, after the German Emperor discovered its merit, his work has come to be looked upon as the epoch making production of a second Wagner, the herald of true all-conquering Germanic culture. Having proven to his satisfaction that by race the Jew is barren in originality Chamberlain could not very well admit the originality of Jesus if he conceded that the Nazarene was of this poor stock. But what is the use of imagination if you cannot introduce it to carry you safely over every obstacle in the way of your theory? Such slight difficulty as this will not floor the gigantic intellect of a Chamberlain. Jesus was original. This is a premise which he will not relinquish. For if he did, he might run counter to the prejudices of Teutonic Germanic Christian orthodoxy and thus perhaps not win the favor of the preaching Emperor. Therefore and what is more logical than this, to save his bacon—pardon me for introducing so unorthodox a suggestion—as Jesus was original and the Jew by race is barren of originality Jesus could not have been of this accursed stock. Then with a learning that is simply fabulous he establishes the fact that Jesus was redhaired. In Galilea Teutonic blood prevailed. Of this redhaired Teutonic stock was the teacher of Nazareth. Triumphantly thus does daunty Chamberlain establish the glorious independence of the religion of Jesus from nasty and narrow Judaism. How this his discovery squares with the teachings of Orthodox Lutheran Protestantism which also is one of the glories of Teutonic culture, it is not for us to ask. If we do inquire we merely manifest again the quibbling temperament, the negative criticism of our Semitic race. Therefore we had better keep silent and in humble submission to the decree of Cham-

berlain become resigned that the religion of Jesus was not Jewish.

Another writer of some notoriety has tried his hand at the problem how to reconcile his low opinion of the capabilities of the Jew with the originality of Jesus. Dr. Otto Weininger, that is the name of the great protagonist of Arianism, has two pet aversions, woman and the Jew. In his thick volume entitled, Geschlecht und Charakter he demonstrates that woman has no soul and has in this only one rival, the Jew. How now of the soulless Jews, the great preacher of the soul, Jesus could have sprung does not puzzle our friend. He has his answer ready in a moment. To illustrate the unfathomable depravity of the Jew, probably by some miracle a Jew had to arise gifted with the powers that undid Judaism. The pathos of the life of Jesus does not lie in his martyrdom on the cross but in the fact that he who rose mountain high above low Judaism was born a Jew. This pathos of his destiny lends his work and words their value. He, the greatest of men, had to illustrate the power of the true man to conquer himself which he did by conquering his Judaism.

It is in vain that one asks for proof for these contentions. Men of Arian blood and megalomania it seems are absolved from the duty laid on others to adduce evidence for their theses. That is indeed the most pitiful aspect of modern anti-Semitism that they who speak in its name are granted a hearing, no matter what lunacies they proclaim, the moment Jew or Judaism is the theme of the discussion. We for our part, Jews though we are, have no cause to belittle the influence of the historical Jesus. Weininger to the contrary notwithstanding, we are not angered by the teachings of the Nazarene. Had they who nominally are his disciples grasped the full content of his teachings, no Jew would

ever have had provocation to confound the teacher with the followers and thus perhaps associate with his name atrocities and injustices for which the human tongue lacks adequate similes of description. If the historical Jesus has laid down the principles of the new religion, the Jew has the best right of all to claim that his religion need not be superseded by the religion of the future.

To meet the objection raised by none more strenuously than by Paul-de-Lagarde, whom none will credit with Philo-Semitic leanings, that religion is not a question of historical events and that therefore belief in and discipleship of the historical Jesus cannot pass for religion, the men of the new Protestant school have urged that the real importance of the historical Jesus lies in his typical life. He made vital what for others was mere theory. He lived what he taught. As an inspiration to imitate him the story of his life is of greatest importance.

It cannot be too often repeated that religion is life. It is not belief either in dogma or in the historicity of an event or a personality. As a type of the highest life it may be doubted whether the historical Jesus can be held in all respects to be adequate. Non-Jews have repeatedly urged the fact that his views on non-resistance, his celibacy, his slight comprehension for the family relations are limitations which modern man has outgrown. The ethics of Jesus are therefore inadequate to meet the needs and lift the pressure of this modern life of ours. Jewish ethics certainly has been free of these modifications and Judaism has never been a mere historical memory. It has been a life. What has been imputed to the historical Jesus Judaism insists is the privilege of every man. Every man is son to God. The unity between man and God is real in every truly human

life. Action, not resignation, righteousness, not despair of sin, are the keynotes of the Jewish ethical proclamation. Responsibility and service are the sacramental words of the Jewish philosophy of life. Whatever rightly or wrongly may be held to be the limitations of the historical Jesus' life or thought, certain it is, the Jewish ideal is not affected thereby. That Jews have known how to live worthily and how to die heroically is attested by every page of the history of the Jew. There was then for the Jew no need of the inspiration of this one life. Thousands of lives of which his memory retained the influence prompted him to imitation and thousands of deaths taught him that truth and loyalty are more potent and more precious than treasure or earthly success. The Jew could brave failure with bravery for he had learned to know for a certainty that failure often is condition of highest triumph.

Thus it is Judaism that seems dowered with the elements to harmonise its ideals with those affirmed as shining forth in the vision of the new religion of tomorrow. Yea those ideals are discovered to be only reiterations of the sacramental passions of the synagogue.

But what about the particularism of Judaism? Certainly the new religion will be all inclusive. But is the famous particularism of the Jew in conflict with this demand? Compared with the oft praised universalism of the church the particularism of Judaism certainly appears to have been the more tolerant and humane. In the church only one road led to salvation. Outside the church there was no felicity. Virtue to be virtue had to be Christian. The virtues of the heathen, said a church father, were but brilliant vices. Judaism recognises that righteousness is independent of race or religion. The righteous of the nations share in felicity

of kingdom come. To be saved none needed adopt Judaism. What then is the ruling thought of Jewish particularism? It resolves itself into the assumption of greater service without richer compensation. There is no prerogative which the Jew may claim by virtue of his Judaism. But the Jew believes that he is chosen to illustrate in life and institution, in thought and conduct, the efficacy and adequacy of the principles which the prophets laid down for the guidance of human life and the constitution of human society. The Jew assumes for himself the historic post of a sentinel and soldier of righteousness and justice. It is his to bring about the "sanctification of the holy name." This is all that is involved in the oft misunderstood phrase, the "mission of Israel." The whole concept may be a mere illusion though I for one think there is sound philosophy in the reasoning which lays upon descendants the duty to carry into effect the teachings of their ancestors if these teachings original as they were when first proclaimed are also the best enunciations of the implications of the dignity and worthiness of human life and labor, of humanity as distinct from an aggregate of brutes with slashing appetites and cross passions. This mission of Israel is by no means incompatible with a possible renationalisation of a Jewish political life. The Jewish state if truly Jewish would be founded on the precepts of the prophets and as such be the organised effort at rendering justice real in the interrelations of state and state, and man and man. A Jewish state genuinely Jewish would shame the Christian states so called that still make the common rights of humanity dependent upon the acceptance of the creed or the accident of birth or blood. The Jew under the consecration of his religion is called to be a potent factor for right in his community. In form particularistic to an

extent, Judaism in intention is and has been universalistic. Its one aim has been the inculcation of the truly human conceptions of life. It calls the Jew to the task to illustrate these concepts which link man to God, before the eyes of all men that these might accept them and live them as well.

Thus Judaism was rightly and richly ethical long before the call went out to spread the foundations of the new temples on the rocks of ethical principles and performances. Ethics to be vital cannot be a prudential contrivance. It must be linked with the center of all life. It must be cosmic, superior to all circumstance of time or place. The ethical principle must be independent of human execution or co-operation. It must be such that even if the whole world should rise in opposition its purposes would come to pass while its opponents would be undone. Ethics postulates a liberty which matter does not confirm. It postulates the triumph of justice, the victory of the good which earth often seems to deny. It is only they who have not learned to reason that may hold that ethical religion dispenses with the transcendental inferences. Why then go off on a Don-Quixotic expedition for new formulae? The old terms endeared to us by a wealth of associations that inspire us to noble resolve and effort could at the best only be replaced by the new while the risk is great lest the new fail to convey the full content of spiritual power of the old. God is the highest symbol ever framed by human tongue. The Divine is implied as underlying the ethical life.

While then willingly acknowledging the good wrought by the ethical culture movement under the guidance and instruction of that great man, Felix Adler, we have found no cogent reason to abandon our fellowship within the historical synagogue on the plea that the ethical

ambition is within the old lines cramped or obscured or limited by certain credal postulates. These postulates are involved in the very warp and woof of the ethical conception of universe and human life. Besides the history of Jew and Judaism alike are rich fountains of ethical inspiration. Co-operation not consolidation is the correct principle of beneficent action. Judaism true to its historical destiny would be one of the many to co-operate in the work of uplifting the race and bringing it nearer to the goal visioned in the dreams of the old prophets, the age and condition of justice triumphant. There is no reasonableness in the plea that to help in this work the Jew must be untrue to the best he has for his own. Loyalty to bride—humanity—is not impaired by fidelity and reverence for the mother—Judaism. Whatever other aids to the ethical consecration Judaism may invoke in ceremony and function of private or public worship, certain it is that the ethical outlook, ambition and obligation is fundamental in all the synagogue inculcates. The so-called new ethics are not newer than were those of Isaiah or Jeremiah. They are not more comprehensive either; they are not profounder or more majestic.

That the new church will be democratic is also a certainty which is a pleasing prospect. But was not this the recurrent insistence of Judaism at all events since the passing of the sacerdotal institutions? Judaism recognises no distinction between the layman and the clergy. If in recent days some have attempted to legitimatize this distinction and have, aping non-Jewish custom, accentuated this assumed difference by the cut of their vest they have merely marked themselves as ignorant of the true positions of the synagogue or as men filled with a ridiculous spirit of windy vanity. Einhorn's words indeed should be carried in mind. On

a memorable occasion he said with that incisiveness of speech that has made him famous, Judaism knows only one distinction that between the Lamdan and the Amhaarez. The Rabbi is not a priest. He is not a clergyman. He has no power to bind and to loosen in the Christian sense of the terms. There is no function which custom has handed over to him but may be as religiously validly performed by another. He is supposed to be the expert in Jewish law and literature the trained teacher at home in the problems of religious life and Jewish thought. When he speaks he has only such authority as his scholarship confers upon his statements. He has not been the recipient of superhuman wisdom in the so-called act of ordination. No holy spirit descended upon him when some master perhaps laid his hands upon his head or gave him the fraternal kiss of recognition. To say that a Rabbi may speak by virtue of the powers vested in him as an ordained Rabbi in Israel is a gratuitous assumption for which there is no warrant either in the history or the genius of Judaism. Every Jew has the right to ask the Rabbi for his authorities. *Ex cathedra* no Rabbi may speak or decide. Every old Jewish decision quoted precedent and warrant from preceding or cotemporaneous authority. Nor is there in Judaism such a thing as an ecclesiastical authority by virtue of numbers. Thousand Rabbis or pretended Rabbis come together in conference have no more right to order arbitrarily the religion of another Jew than has one Rabbi. And one Rabbi who is a real Rabbi versed in Rabbinical literature may speak with greater authority than a thousand Reverend gentlemen clothed in Episcopal vests and garbed in white neckerchiefs or stately surplices. Thus again if the principle of democratic equality is the characteristic in the organ-

isation of the religion of to-morrow Judaism has naught to modify in its own household.

It is perhaps not fair for me to animadvert upon the differences now disturbing the synagogue. I hail them as signs of life. That once more the issues between reform and conservative partisans are discussed is a good omen that we too are about to emerge from the somnolence of indifferent apathy. All of us however have one sacred obligation to meet in these very days of combat and promise withal. We must provide for the fostering of Jewish literature and learning. We must as Jews and equipped with the learning to make us competent spokesmen of Judaism meet those that would step onward and upward out of the narrower confines of credal orthodoxy. We must meet the adversary be he of the type of Chamberlain or of the school of Bousset or Harnack. It is incumbent upon us to keep alive in our pulpits the best that Judaism has produced in thought. Our Rabbis certainly ought to be at home in our literature and thus escape the temptation to quote from the N. T. when Talmud or Apocrypha of Hebrew phraseology furnishes the original of the gospel saying. That is ridiculous liberalism which puts aside its own jewels in the desire to parade the paste diamonds purloined from abroad. Of this pseudo liberalism we have had a surfeit of late. Let our Jewish consciousness be aroused once more. It is in concordance with the noblest ambition the world would make effective to-day under religious consecration for the betterment of conditions and the uplifting of man. Are you surprised to hear me, a so-called Radical, plead for a deepening of our Jewish consciousness? If you are it is due to the fact that our Radical Judaism has perhaps not been presented to you, true to its intentions.

My Radicalism and it is that which I imbibed at the feet of my own father and teacher and found in the in-

struction of my master Geiger both of blessed memory, the Radicalism of Einhorn and Samuel Adler intends to be more Jewish than ever was official orthodoxy. We hunger for more of Judaism not for less of it. If we lay little stress upon ceremony it is because we do not regard with Paul Judaism to be a dead Law. The Law we believe in accordance with the results of modern criticism to be of non-Jewish origin. Judaism stands for ideas. To quote my father and now after him also Guedemann of Vienna, Judaism is Lehre not Gesetz. Into the non-Jewish symbol or custom the Jewish spirit poured its golden wine and thus made even the symbol speak of the nobler views. None of the rites which pass for Jewish as such are of Jewish invention. Sacrifice, even circumcision, yea the Sabbath as an institution, these and all of their class have their counterparts in the ritual of pagan religion and originally served non-Jewish intentions. The idea is vital in religion and Judaism. When we find the idea in danger of dying because the frame or institution into which it is incorporated has deadened or obscured it we do not hesitate to free it from the crushing envelope. This is also the motive of our endeavor again to have a real Sabbath. We know the Sabbath principle is fundamental. But because it is fundamental we would give it the place and crown now denied it. Jewish to the core Radical Judaism would be one of the many influences to prepare the modern world for the nobler life as befits them who are created in the image of God. We feel that as spiritual descendants of the prophets this is our historic task. In that task we find our credentials for preserving the historical lines. Judaism has nothing to learn from the new religion. It has much to teach them that would be led away from dogmatism, intolerance, ceremonialism ecclesiasticism to the freedom which morally consecrated life bestows in abundance.

GTU Library
3 2400 00392 2691

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall

DATE DUE

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.